

Réseau des Étudiants Noirs de McGill Black Students' Network McGill

*Située sur les territoires traditionnels des collectivités Haudenosaunee et Anishinaabe.
Located on Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe, traditional territories.*

bsn@ssmu.ca | ssmu.ca | 416-3501 rue Peel, Montréal, QC, H3A 1W7



Service Overview

Service Mandate/Mission

The Black Students' Network (BSN) is a SSMU Service committed to supporting, representing, and celebrating Black students at McGill University. It aims to foster a sense of community, empowerment, and belonging for Black-identifying students while educating the broader McGill community on issues affecting Black people locally and globally.

The three (3) main tenets of the BSN are as follows:

- Community Building: Creating safe and affirming spaces for Black students to connect, heal, and thrive.
- Advocacy and Representation: Voicing Black students' concerns at the institutional level through collaboration with SSMU, the Office of the Provost and other student organizations.
- Education and Cultural Awareness: Promoting the diversity and variety of Black culture and experience through events, workshops, and panels open to all students and the greater Montreal community.

Contact Info

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Activities & Operations

Key Activities This Semester (Free Events)

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1. General Assembly (September 2025): The semester began with BSN's General Assembly, which officially introduced the new executive team, outlined upcoming initiatives and presented the Service's vision for the 2025–2026 academic year. This event encouraged open dialogue between the executive and the student body.

2. Soul Food (October 2025): A beloved BSN tradition, Soul Food brought together over 100 participants for an evening of comfort food, music and community bonding. The event highlighted the culinary heritage of the Black diaspora while promoting discussions on cultural preservation and belonging at McGill.

3. Book Club (2 Sessions): The BSN Book Club resumed this fall with two sessions featuring works by Black authors, such as Alice Walker. The sessions focused on fostering critical discussion, leisure reading, and intellectual exchange among students. Participants appreciated the safe and intimate space to share thoughts on race, identity and literature.

4. BSN x BVA Breakfast Collaboration (October 2025): In partnership with the Black Varsity Association (BVA), BSN co-hosted a Breakfast & Networking event celebrating Black student-athletes at McGill. The event spotlighted their experiences balancing athletic commitments and academic life while offering a relaxed space for inter-community networking.

5. Cooking with the Diaspora (TBC – November 2025): Planned as part of the “Cultural Series,” this event aims to invite community members and students to share and prepare traditional recipes from across the African, Caribbean and Afro-Latinx diasporas. The initiative is designed to celebrate culinary heritage and foster intergenerational storytelling through food.

6. Braiding Workshop (TBC – November 2025): This workshop will focus on the cultural and historical significance of braiding within the Black community, offering students a hands-on learning experience with professional stylists. It aims to promote self-expression, entrepreneurship and inter-student bonding through shared artistry.

7. CV & Career Development Workshop (TBC – December 2025): Organized in collaboration with McGill's Career Planning Service (CaPS) will help students refine their résumés and professional profiles while addressing systemic barriers Black students face in job recruitment.

8. Dinner Event with U0/U1 Representatives of Black Associations (TBC – December 2025): This initiative seeks to bring together first-year (U0/U1) representatives from all Black student associations and clubs to strengthen ties, exchange experiences and strategize for continuity within their respective organizations. The event also serves to introduce new students to the broader Black community at McGill and to mentorship opportunities within BSN.

Usage / Participation Statistics

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Social Media Reach: Over the last 90 days, BSN gained 367 new Instagram followers, bringing the total audience to over 3,000 followers. Engagement has tripled, with average monthly interactions rising from 1,000 to between 3,600 and 4,000.

Event Attendance: Average participation per event reached 75 attendees, with events involving food or prizes drawing 100+ participants.

Community Engagement: Direct collaborations involved over 10 Black associations and clubs across faculties, ensuring the Service's initiatives reflect a wide spectrum of student experiences and interests.

Highlights & Success

Enhanced Inter-Association Communication: A new group chat network was created over the summer to centralize communication among all SSMU-affiliated and faculty-affiliated Black associations/clubs. A second chat was created for non-affiliated Black student groups, providing them with visibility and guidance on affiliation processes. This has already fostered a stronger culture of collaboration, transparency and solidarity across Black-led organizations.

Consistent BSN Presence and Representation: BSN executives have maintained a strong presence at nearly every event organized by other Black associations, as well as SSMU-led equity and engagement workshops. The Service has participated in nearly all Black Affairs meetings and SSMU-related gatherings, missing only one to date, marking a significant improvement from previous years when presence was inconsistent.

Improved Feedback and Perception: Partner organizations have expressed that communication with BSN has become more proactive and efficient, particularly regarding funding inquiries, event promotion and logistical support. This improvement has led to greater trust in the Service and a stronger sense of collective representation under SSMU's umbrella.

Bridging Academics and Community: This past Winter semester, and this current Fall semester, the BSN has expanded its programming to include more academically oriented events, such as the Book Club, collaborations with the McGill Pre-Law Students' Society (MPLSS), and the *Black Wine and Cheese* with professors and faculty. These initiatives have helped bridge the gap between Black students and faculty; have promoted engagement with literature and research; and created pathways toward postgraduate and professional opportunities in fields such as law, academia, and public policy.

Operational Excellence: Internal organization and role delegation have strengthened considerably this semester, ensuring that no event or meeting is unattended and that follow-ups are handled swiftly.

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Challenges / Barriers Faced

Administrative Delays: Despite significant progress in internal coordination, delays in cheque requests and reimbursements from SSMU have occasionally slowed down project execution, especially for time-sensitive events. These delays have not only disrupted planning and event delivery, but have also caused reputational harm to our Service. In several cases, vendors and community partners have experienced late payments for services rendered, leading to strained relationships and a loss of credibility, even though these issues are entirely beyond BSN control and fall on that of SSMU. For example, participants involved in initiatives like *Pick Your Path* have still not received payments, despite BSN having submitted all required documentation on time. This situation is especially damaging, as external collaborators do not have insight into the internal administrative processes of SSMU and thus associate these lapses directly with the BSN. We stress that resolving these systemic financial delays is critical to maintaining community trust and professionalism.

Funding Constraints for External Collaborations: With recent SSMU regulations restricting the allocation of funds to non-McGill students, BSN faced challenges sustaining programs like *Pick Your Path*, which historically engaged CEGEP participants. This required rethinking how collaboration and mentorship can be maintained within policy boundaries.

Capacity and Executive Workload: The high level of activity and inter-association engagement has increased the workload on executive members, requiring continuous attention to balance efficiency with well-being and academic responsibilities. Harder for U0/U1/U2 students.

Finances

Budget allocations

Student Fees perceived for Fall 2025 semester: **41,164.20**

Trial Balance as of October 31: **33,526.78**

Previous year surplus

Surplus from 2024-2025 academic year: **4,709.91**

[Fall 2025 Budget](#)

Future Plans/Projects

Upcoming projects this semester



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1. Black Grad & Gala 2026 (May 1, 2026): The Black Grad & Gala remains BSN's cornerstone event and one of the largest celebrations of Black excellence at McGill. This formal evening recognizes graduating students for their academic achievements, leadership, and community impact. The event will feature a distinguished keynote speaker, community awards, a live band, and a catered dinner.

Early preparations are underway, including venue scouting, sponsorship outreach, and alumni partnerships to expand financial and institutional support. This year's goal is to increase attendance and alumni engagement, positioning the Gala as both a student celebration and a networking opportunity for graduates entering professional life.

2. Youth Day (Winter 2026 – In Planning [Likely in January]): BSN is currently planning Youth Day 2026, an event dedicated to Black high school and CEGEP students interested in pursuing postsecondary education. The initiative aims to foster mentorship, academic inspiration, and early engagement with McGill's Black community.

The Service has begun seeking sponsorships and partnerships with campus and external organizations to fund transportation, meals, and programming for visiting students. The event will include faculty panels, student-led workshops, and interactive activities designed to demystify university life.

This initiative also contributes to BSN's long-term goal of data-driven reporting on Black academic representation by gathering insights into youth interest by faculty and program.

3. Community Care & Wellness Week (Winter 2026): In response to increasing student stress and burnout, BSN will host a Community Care & Wellness Week, a series of free events centering on mental health, spirituality, rest and resilience. The programming will include mindfulness sessions, guided discussions with Black psychologists and healers, and peer-led conversations about balancing academic pressure and well-being.

This initiative will be delivered in collaboration with McGill's Student Wellness Hub, the Black Mental Health Initiative, and community practitioners, reaffirming BSN's holistic approach to student support.

4. Professional Development Mixer (Winter 2026): The Professional Development Mixer will connect Black students with corporate partners, alumni and McGill faculty to create meaningful networking and mentorship opportunities.

This year's edition will focus on career readiness, internship pathways, and leadership in professional spaces, featuring recruiters and alumni from Desautels, Arts, and Engineering. The Service also plans to co-host a CV and LinkedIn Workshop in the weeks preceding the mixer to maximize student preparedness.

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5. Support for Black Student Associations and Campus Collaborations: BSN has prioritized strengthening collaboration and institutional continuity among Black-led associations across campus. This includes:

- McGill African Students' Society (MASS): Providing logistical and promotional support for their upcoming cultural showcase, including assistance with event coordination and sponsorship outreach.
- Black Students in Political Science (BSPS): Working closely with this newly founded group to help them establish their governance structure, branding, and event planning calendar. BSN has committed to mentoring their executive team to ensure sustainable leadership beyond their inaugural year.
- Black Medical Students' Association (BMSA): Holding meetings to determine how BSN can support their annual conference participation, whether through financial contributions, shared promotion, or institutional advocacy within SSMU.
- McGill Black Alumni Association (MBAA): Ongoing meetings to plan a joint alumni-student event, designed to reconnect graduates with current students and create a stronger mentorship and funding pipeline.

Through these partnerships, BSN continues to affirm its role as both a service and hub for all Black associations, ensuring consistent communication and resource-sharing across faculties.

6. McGill's Official Black History Month Campaign (February 2026): BSN will once again take a lead role in coordinating McGill's official Black History Month campaign, in partnership with the Office of the Provost, the Equity Team, and Black-led student associations.

Planning has already begun to curate this year's theme, identify guest speakers, and organize anchor events such as the Opening Ceremony, the BHM and the closing Gala Reception. The campaign will emphasize representation, intergenerational dialogue and institutional accountability, while spotlighting the work of Black scholars, artists, and community leaders within and beyond McGill.

7. Black Wine & Cheese (March 2026): A casual and social gathering where Black McGill students can connect with Black professors and faculty members to help foster a stronger connection across campus. The wine and cheese event provides an opportunity for students to engage with mentors, share experiences, and build relationships that will positively impact their academic and professional lives! The event first launched in March 2025, where we hosted over 60 Black students and faculty.

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Long term goals



Annual Digital and Physical Report on Black Academic Presence: Establish a comprehensive reporting system at the end of each academic year to collect and present data on Black academic life at McGill. This would include statistics such as the number of Black students per faculty and per program, alongside highlights of student initiatives, leadership roles, and research accomplishments. The goal is to create both a digital dashboard and a print report to share with university stakeholders, helping institutionalize visibility and accountability regarding Black representation.

Creation of a BSN Investment Fund: Develop a long-term investment fund dedicated to sustaining the Network's financial independence and supporting future generations of BSN executives. The fund would finance recurring programs, emergency student support and future infrastructure or scholarship initiatives.

Continuity of Collaboration with Black Associations and Clubs: Strengthen BSN's role as an umbrella service for Black student associations across faculties (e.g., DABI, BMSA, BLSAM, CBNA, CSS, NSBE MCGILL, etc.). This includes ensuring consistent financial and logistical support for legacy events and helping new associations navigate SSMU's processes for sustainability.

Sponsorship Expansion: Build a structured outreach plan to secure sponsorships from external partners, local businesses, and corporate entities committed to equity in education. The objective is to diversify funding sources and reduce reliance on SSMU's annual allocations.

Strengthen Relations with the McGill Black Alumni Association (MBAA): Deepen collaboration with the McGill Alumni Office, especially the McGill Black Alumni Association, to create a mutually supportive ecosystem between current students and alumni. This includes mentorship programs, joint networking events, and alumni fundraising campaigns aligned with BSN's investment and legacy initiatives.